

Litter Literature

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- describe the effects of littering,
- realize that cleaning up provides many benefits, and
- simulate the roles of characters from a story.

Method

Students listen to a story, discuss, and then portray the roles of the citizens in the story.

Materials

- Book: *The Wartville Wizard* by Don Madden (Aladdin Books, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993). The book is available by order at most book stores, or from: Aladdin Books (ISBN 0-689-71667-2) and online booksellers
- Writing materials

Time

45 minutes – 1 hour

Vocabulary

- | | |
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| • environment | • trash |
| • litter | • waste |
| • non-point source pollution | • receptacle |

Background

The environment is everything around us. The natural environment is living and non-living things that occur naturally on Earth. The built environment is a constructed setting including houses, schools, and playgrounds. The environment is a factor in littering behavior. A strong contributor to littering is the prevalence of existing litter.



Why do people litter?

- **Personal Choice.** KAB research shows Individual behavior—or a person choosing to litter—was observed by nearly one in five, or 17% of all disposals in public spaces. And 81% occurred with notable intent.
- **Litter Begets Litter.** Individuals are much more likely to litter in a littered environment. Once there, litter attracts more litter. By contrast, a clean community discourages littering and improves overall community quality of life. Availability and proximity to trash and recycling receptacles also impact whether someone chooses to litter. About 15% of littering is affected by the environment, i.e. existing litter, lack of trash or recycling receptacles. According to the research completed by Keep America Beautiful, at the time of improper disposal, the average estimated distance to the nearest receptacle was 29 feet. The likelihood of littering increased steadily for receptacles at a greater distance.
- **It's Not My Responsibility.** Some people feel no sense of ownership for parks, beaches, and other public areas. They believe someone else will pick up after them. Community cleanup and beautification projects that engage local residents can help foster ownership for public spaces.

Procedure

1. Introduce the term environment. Our environment at school is different than our environment at home. Ask students to name objects from their home and from their school environments. Compare and contrast similar and different objects.
2. Discuss the importance of keeping the environment clean. Ask students what happens when the environment is not clean. Introduce the terms litter, littering, trash and waste. Explain that litter is waste put in the wrong place (e.g., on the ground, on the road, etc.). Explain littering is the behavior or action of placing waste in the wrong place.

Ask the students what happens to some litter when it rains. Explain that when litter travels down a storm drain, it is one type of non-point source pollution. What about when the wind blows? Wind also transports litter. What about when animals interact with litter in the environment?

3. Read aloud the book *The Wartville Wizard*. This story takes place in the town of Wartville where residents are illegally dumping their trash and litter: soda bottles under flowers, juice cans by mailboxes, and candy wrappers and papers on the road side. Every day the trash pile continues to grow. One man continues to clean the town litter, until one day, he realizes he has the power to get rid of all the litter forever. He magically sends each piece of litter back to the person who dropped it. The town has a meeting to decide how to handle the problem.
4. Depending on time and size of audience, ask students to volunteer to pantomime the various people in the book. Read the story again as the students pantomime. This may be done as an enrichment activity at a later time.
5. Discuss the book as a class:
 - What is litter? (Waste out of place)
 - Describe the man's home. How was the inside of his home different from the outside?
 - Where was all of the litter coming from that the old man found?
 - How did he feel about all the litter? How would you feel if the town was your home? What happened after the old man got power over the litter?
 - How would you feel if you had power over the litter?
 - How would you feel if the litter stuck to you?

- What did the people of Wartville finally do?
 - What would you have done if you had been a citizen of Wartville?
 - How did the people of Wartville discover that the old man had the power over litter?
 - How did the townspeople solve their litter problem?
 - What can you do to help prevent other people from littering?
 - What does litter do to our environment?
 - Where have you seen litter in your community?
6. Ask the class to identify the main characters in the book, *The Wartville Wizard* (an old man, Barbetta Swartley, the driver, Harvey Bender, Mr. Fullerton K. Hardboard, Mrs. Mabel Botts, Dr. Melvin Splint, Jimmy Van Slammer, the sheriff.)

Assessment

- Have students describe the effects of littering and how it affects the environment. Suggest ways it can be prevented.
- Have students describe how waste can be handled, such as placing in the trash can, recycle bin, or compost.

Technology Connections

- Create a video or take pictures showing littered conditions and explain how individuals can manage their waste by properly disposing of it or recycling it.
- Using video and pictures of the story the students pantomimed, have them create a Moviemaker movie.

Enrichment

- Ask for student volunteers to pantomime the various people in the book. Read the story again as the students pantomime.
- Have the students create costumes and write the script for a play of the book, *The Wartville Wizard*.
- Plan a litter art fair. To enter the fair, students must design a litter character using trash or litter. Display the litter characters at school, a public library, or a local shopping mall.
- Research other books on litter and create similar questions to review with others.